

# Australian delegation calls on Dr Jitendra; discusses collaboration in StartUps, Space

■ STATE TIMES NEWS  
NEW DELHI: Union Minister, Dr Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said that India and Australia are deeply engaged in every area of collaboration in Science & Technology. Lauding Australia for providing Earth Station tracking facility for Gaganyaan, India's first human space mission scheduled for launch in 2025, Dr Jitendra said there is scope for wider collaboration in sectors including Space Research and Biotechnology. He offered Industry tie-ups in StartUps including Agritech, Aroma Mission and Lavender cultivation. This was stated by the Union Minister, when a high-level Australian delegation led by its High Commissioner to India, Philip Green called on him here today. The Australian High Commissioner urged Dr



A high level Australian delegation led by its High Commissioner to India, Philip Green OAM calling on Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh at Science Centre, New Delhi.

Jitendra for an early resolution of Round 15 of proposals under the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF). Over 360 projects, fellowships and workshops have been supported till now in areas of importance to Australia and India. Dr Jitendra Singh assured that India will expedite meetings to resolve pending issues at the earliest. The two sides identified

Green Energy (including hydrogen, solar, etc. and energy storage solutions), Environment and Clean Technologies (Carbon capture, conversion, sequestration and utilisation), Strategic and critical minerals, Next-Gen Sustainable Mining and advanced Manufacturing, Sustainable Infrastructure, Marine Technologies and Affordable Healthcare as Priority areas for cooperation.

The delegations also agreed to enhance researcher/student exchange programs for connecting the youth, setting up of Joint technology incubation centres for initial/growth phase of tech development and enhancing involvement of Industry in R&D - 2+2 (Research Institutions + Industry) mode projects for co-development and upscaling of technologies. Dr Jitendra said, from just 4 Startups in the Space sector a few years ago, India now has over 150 Space StartUps, some of the pioneering ones of whom are now worth thousand crore rupees. He proposed that IN-SPACe work with Australia Space Agency (ASA) and facilitate joint projects with the Space StartUps. ASA is extending full support including conducting a site survey (on behalf of

ISRO) at Cocos island in June 2021. In January 2022, ISRO and ASA signed the Implementing Arrangement to formalise this cooperation. ISRO officials visited Cocos Island in August 2023 and carried out a frequency survey at the proposed site. The Indian delegation included Secretary, DST, Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, CSIR, DBT, Dr Rajesh S. Gokhale as well as senior officers of ISRO and Department of Atomic Energy.

Pakistan to deport illegal immigrants from November 2



## Child labour a major concern in J&K

■ SHAKEELA ANDRBI  
SRINAGAR: About 5000 children are labourers in Jammu and Kashmir but independent data on child labour in the Union Territory shows that there are more than one lakh child labourers ,most of whom work in the handicraft sector, automobile workshop, brick kilns, agriculture and as domestic servants in homes. Thousands of children are seen working as vendors, bus conductors and auto drivers. According to 2021 Survey ,the total child labour population in India was 81.2 lakh which is expected to decline further to 74.3 lakh by 2025.State level estimates reveal that by 2025 only four states will be having about three fifths(56)percent of country's total child labour population. The States are UP,Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan . Child labour means the hard and heavy work for money done by the velvet and fragile hands of children, like many parts of the world is a defining feature of Jammu and Kashmir social life as well. Despite the exis-

tence of many strict laws against this menace, the number of children working as laborers in various sectors is on the rise across J&K. Though the backbreaking labour is largely seen as an offence, it seems that we, as one people, are yet not prepared to prevent it or abandon it on ground level. Some parents force their children to engage their children to engage in hard labour due to poverty or lack of support. But it is largely an act of sharing the burden or mere exploitation by society that children are seen engaged in hazardous labour in various social sectors. Horticulture sector is the prime example. Similarly, hundreds of minor children can be seen doing manual labour in Dhabas, restaurants, railway stations; working as drivers/ conductors and construction workers; pruning apple trees, picking apple, carrying apple boxes and doing other hazardous tasks to earn some rupees for their family. According to the United Nations figures, there are an estimated 152 million chil-

dren in child labour; 72 million among them are in hazardous work. In the least developed countries, more than one in four children (ages 5-17) are engaged in labour seen as detrimental to their health and development. According to experts,though no child would be happy to work as a labourer, it is the abject financial position, backwardness and low educational awareness of people in an area which have pushed children into the smithy of labour. Moreover, the ongoing political situation across the world has added to the number of child laborers: thousands of children have lost their parents and guardians during the conflict and without a breadwinner, these children get trapped in the mire of child labour aimed at supporting their families'. "The unfortunate act has struck deep roots in J&K in the presence of statutory laws, anti-child labour rights bodies and commissions apart from a mushroom growth of educational institutions: thousands of children can be seen working at

home as domestic servants, as carpet weavers, etc. and outside home in various other sectors. The non-stop operation of the menace is a big reason to worry, he added. Meanwhile to curb the menace of Child Labour in the country the Ministry of Labour and Employment has been implementing National Child Labour Project Scheme for rehabilitation of child labourers through District Project Societies under the chairmanship of the District Magistrate Under the NCLP scheme ,the children in the age group of 9 to 14 are rescued /withdrawn from work and enrolled in the NCLP Special Training Centres, where they are provided with bridge education, Vocational training mid-day meal, health care before being mainstreamed into formal educations system. Beside government efforts, Parents, teachers and preachers can play a key role in closing the door on child labour, they can take care of a child's health and education. Turning a blind eye to the humanitarian issue is an invitation to dark future.

## EPFO Regional Office Jammu receives Bhavishya Nidhi Award

■ STATE TIMES NEWS  
JAMMU: EPFO Regional Office, Jammu received the Bhavishya Nidhi Award in the category of "Best Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0 Campaign" in 2023. This award was presented at a function held in New Delhi by the EPFO Head Office. The award was given to Rizwan Uddin, Regional P F Commissioner - I, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh by Rameshwar Teli, Minister of State, Labour and Employment, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India. The event took place as part of the celebration of the 71st Foundation Day of EPFO and was inaugurated by Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Labour and Employment, Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of India, through a video conference at Bharat Mandapam Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. During the Bhavishya Nidhi Award function, Rizwan Uddin was accompanied by Sanjeev Kumar, SSSA, RO Jammu, and they received the award in



Rizwan Uddin, Regional PF Commissioner-I, J&K and Ladakh receiving award from Rameshwar Teli, MoS.

the presence of various dignitaries, including Arti Ahuja, Secretary (Labour and Employment), Neelam Shami Rao, Central Provident Fund Commissioner (EPFO), Rajendra Kumar, Director General (ESIC), and S. K. Agarwal, ACC (HQ) EPFO. The Regional Office, Jammu, received this award for its impressive all-round performance in conducting the Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0 (NAN 2.0) programme. This program had a positive impact on various parameters, such as

increasing awareness among stakeholders, growing membership, providing handholding sessions, and making efforts in the field of pension and e-nomination, among other achievements. Rizwan Uddin expressed his gratitude to all the stakeholders, including members, employers, higher authorities of district and UT administration, Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir Division, the staff and officers of the office, higher officers of the Zonal Office,

and Head Office. He mentioned that the office had been taking various initiatives to increase coverage, compliance, and awareness among stakeholders. These initiatives include conducting regular awareness and outreach programs through seminars and webinars and being accessible to stakeholders through various communication channels such as email, telephone, and social media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Koo, among others.

## MGNF joint convocation ceremony held across 9 IIMs including IIM Jammu Celebrates Transformation of Tomorrow's Leaders

■ STATE TIMES NEWS  
JAMMU: The two-year Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) programme recently concluded with a joint convocation ceremony held across the nine Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). The ceremony was graced by several dignitaries, including Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education, and Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Prof. T G Sitharam, Chairman of AICTE, K. Sanjay Murthy, Secretary of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary of MSDE, Nilambur Sharan, Senior Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and other officers from both the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). During the ceremony, 40 fellows from the IIM Jammu cohort were awarded certificates in Public Policy. IIM Jammu also organized a 5-day pre-convocation workshop for the fellows at the IIM Jammu Jagti campus, where the work done by the fellows in their respective districts to improve the skill ecosystem was presented. The convocation ceremony was attended by various dignitaries, including Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director of



IIM Management along with students during the convocation ceremony in Jammu.

IIM Jammu, Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics and Programme Director of MGNF, Dr. Muqbil Burhan, Programme Director of MGNF at IIM Jammu, and Dr. Shahid Jibran, Program Manager of MGNF. Prof. Arnab Mukherjee, Program Director of MGNF at IIM Bangalore, emphasized the program's commitment to developing the next generation of rural development leaders. The MGNF programme covered over 650 districts, where fellows focused on Planning, Persuasion, and Persistence (the 3P's) to empower rural India and drive sustainable development. Atul Kumar Tiwari praised the MGNF program as an ideal example of skilling and education in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He high-

lighted the importance of skill development in promoting economic progress and acknowledged the MGNF fellows' role in supporting "Skill Development" and "Aatmanirbhar Bharat." K. Sanjay Murthy appreciated the collaboration between State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and premier educational institutions like IIMs as a model for industry-academia cooperation under NEP 2020. The ceremony included the release of the MGNF Report by IIM Bangalore, which showcased the significant work undertaken by the MGNF fellows across the country, highlighting innovative projects, sustainable initiatives, and life-changing milestones in rural com-

munities. Dharmendra Pradhan congratulated the fellows and suggested linking their academic achievements with the National Bank of Credit. He emphasized the importance of digital skill development and women's empowerment and encouraged all stakeholders to make skilling a mission for creating a healthy ecosystem in the country. Nilambur Sharan, Senior Economic Advisor in MSDE, delivered the vote of thanks, acknowledging the support from dignitaries and premier institutions. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates to the MGNF fellows by Prof B.S. Sahay, Director of IIM Jammu, in the presence of Prof. Jabir Ali and Dr. Muqbil Burhan, Programme Directors of MGNF, IIM Jammu.

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